



Current Affairs 13 December 2021 for UPSC Exam | Legacy IAS Academy

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CJI's observations show judicial notice of sedition law misuse

Context:

Earlier in 2021, the Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana made scathing remarks in open court to the Government about the chilling effect of the "colonial law" on Sedition which suppresses the freedoms of ordinary people.

Recently, Law Minister Kiren Rijju's replied in Parliament that there is no proposal to scrap sedition from the penal code.

Relevance:



GS-II: Polity and Constitution (Constitutional Provisions, Fundamental Rights), GS-II: Governance (Government Policies and Initiatives)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. What is Sedition?
2. About Sedition law
3. SC Judgement in the Vinod Dua case
4. CJI on Sedition in 2021
5. Views of Judiciary in the past
6. Criticism of Sedition
7. The Problem of Sedition being constitutional

What is Sedition?

Sedition, which falls under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, is defined as any action that brings or attempts to bring hatred or contempt towards the government of India and has been illegal in India since 1870.

Historical background of Sedition laws

- Sedition as a concept comes from Elizabethan England, where if you criticised the king and were fomenting a rebellion, it was a crime against the state.
- When they ruled India, the British feared Wahhabi rebellion. They brought the [sedition] law in, and it was used against our freedom fighters as well.
- We must remember that both Mahatma Gandhi and [Bal Gangadhar] Tilak were tried under this law and sentenced.
- Government didn't remove it because every administrator has this thought that dissent is okay, but beyond a certain point it gets dangerous and an administration must have the means to control it.
- Previously policemen were much more independent. But since Indian independence, the independence of the police has also been severely compromised. So, any local leader can almost bully a policeman into registering a case.



About Sedition law

- The law was originally drafted by Thomas Macaulay. Since its introduction in 1870, meaning of the term, as well as its ambit, has changed significantly.
- Sedition is a cognisable, non-compoundable, and non-bailable offence, under which sentencing can be between three years to imprisonment for life.

About Section 124A of Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- The Indian Penal Code in Section 124A lays down the offence:
- “Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the Government established by law in India, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine.”
- A person charged under this law can’t apply for a government job. They have to live without their passport and must present themselves in the court as and when required.

SC Judgement in the Vinod Dua case

- Vinod Dua is a journalist had criticised Prime Minister Modi and the Centre for the handling of the migrant crisis in 2020 and a case of sedition was filed against him for allegedly making remarks against Prime Minister.
- While the Supreme Court shielded Dua from arrest earlier, the case itself was quashed by a two-judge bench of the SC which held that his remarks constituted genuine criticism of the government and could not be labelled seditious.
- The significance of the verdict lies in the Supreme Court’s subsequent reiteration of the Kedar Nath Singh principles.

CJI on Sedition in 2021

- Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana delivered a stinging rebuke to the government in open court regarding the stifling impact of “colonial law,” which restricts ordinary people’s liberties.



- The CJI likened the use of the sedition charge (Section 124A of the IPC) to a carpenter being handed a tool “to cut a piece of wood and he uses it to chop the entire forest altogether.”
- The Chief Justice questioned why a democracy required a legislation that had been used by the British to arrest Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
- Attorney General K.K. Venugopal answered in court to the CJI’s oral observations, stating there was no need to strike down Section 124A.
- The court has already requested a formal response from the government by giving notice on a petition to quash Section 124A submitted by Major General S.G. Vombatkere (retd.).
- A petition filed by renowned journalist Arun Shourie and the NGO Common Cause, both represented by counsel Prashant Bhushan, contends that Section 124A lacks even a “presumption of legality.”

Significance of Remark

- The CJI’s remarks in court show that the top court has taken judicial note of the State’s abuse of the sedition provision.
- The observations were made by the CJI throughout the court’s sessions.
- Though not part of a formal order or verdict, oral observations made during a court hearing reflect the constitutional court’s train of thought.
- Furthermore, the Supreme Court’s 2015 decision in the Shreya Singhal case called for the repeal of ambiguous rules that stifle free expression and limit personal liberty.

Views of Judiciary in the past

- The constitutionality of sedition was challenged in the Supreme Court in **Kedar Nath Vs State of Bihar (1962)**. The Court upheld the law on the basis that this power was required by the state to protect itself.
 - However, it had added a vital caveat that “a person could be prosecuted for sedition only if his acts caused incitement to violence or intention or tendency to create public disorder or cause disturbance of public peace”.
 - The court held that “a citizen has a right to say or write whatever he likes about the Government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comment, so long as he does not incite people to violence against the Government established by law or with the intention of creating public disorder”.
- In the **1995 Balwant Singh case** verdict, the Apex Court said, ‘The casual raising of slogans once or twice by two individuals alone cannot be said to be aimed at exciting or attempt to excite hatred or disaffection towards the government’.
- In 2016, the Supreme Court had reiterated these necessary safeguards and held that



they should be followed by all authorities.

- Various verdicts in Romesh Thappar case, Kedar Nath Singh case, Kanahiya Kumar case re-defined a seditious act only if it had essential ingredients which are:
 - Disruption of public order
 - Attempt to violently overthrow a lawful government
 - Threatening the security of State or of public.

Criticism of Sedition

1. **Colonial Era law:** It is a colonial relic and a preventive provision that should only be read as an emergency measure.
2. **Right to Freedom of expression:** Use of Section 124A by the government might go beyond the reasonable restrictions provided under fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression as per Article 19 of the Constitution.
3. **Democratic foundation:** Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of robust public debate in a vibrant democracy and therefore, should not be constructed as sedition. The sedition law is being misused as a tool to persecute political dissent.
4. **Lower Conviction Rate:** Though police are charging more people with sedition, few cases actually result in a conviction. Since 2016, only four sedition cases have seen a conviction in court which indicates that sedition as an offence has no solid legal grounding in India.
5. **Vague provision of sedition laws:** The terms used under Section 124A like 'disaffection' are vague and subject to different interpretation to the whims and fancies of the investigating officers.
6. **Other legal measure for offences against the state:** Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (1967), have provisions that penalize "disrupting the public order" or "overthrowing the government with violence and illegal means". These are sufficient for protecting the national integrity. ◦ Similarly, the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act is also there for offences against the state.
7. **Perception of law:** Globally, sedition is increasingly viewed as a draconian law and was revoked in the United Kingdom in 2010. In Australia, following the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) the term sedition was removed.

The Problem of Sedition being constitutional

- The law of sedition was not struck down by the Supreme Court in 1962 as unconstitutional even though sedition, as defined in Section 124A of the IPC, clearly violates Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution which confers the Fundamental Right of freedom of speech and expression, the most valuable right of free citizens of a free



country.

- Further, this section does not get protection under Article 19(2) on the ground of reasonable restriction.
- It may be mentioned in this context that sedition as a reasonable restriction, though included in the draft Article 19 was deleted when that Article was finally adopted by the Constituent Assembly. It clearly shows that the Constitution makers did not consider sedition as a reasonable restriction.
- However, the Supreme Court was not swayed by the decision of the Constituent Assembly. It took advantage of the words 'in the interest of public order' used in Article 19(2) and held that the offence of sedition arises when seditious utterances can lead to disorder or violence.
- This act of reading down Section 124A brought it clearly under Article 19(2) and saved the law of sedition. Otherwise, sedition would have had to be struck down as unconstitutional.

-Source: The Hindu

RBI Governor, PM signal reforms in urban co-operative banks

Context:

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor indicated that the banking regulator will ring in sweeping regulatory changes to reform urban co-operative banks that have been plagued by a spate of failures, and warned people against parking their savings in banks offering high returns.

Relevance:

GS-III: Indian Economy (Banking)

Dimensions of the Article:



1. What are Cooperative Banks?
2. Structure of co-operative banks in India
3. Importance of Cooperative Banks
4. Concerns Associated with Urban Co-operative Bank

What are Cooperative Banks?

- Co-operative banks are financial entities established on a co-operative basis and belonging to their members. This means that the customers of a co-operative bank are also its owners.
- Cooperative Banks continue to be important and the ideal organisations even in the changing economic environment, as participation and inclusion are central to poverty reduction.

Important Details with respect to Urban Cooperative Banks

- Co-operative banks in India are registered under the State's Cooperative Societies Act.
- The Co-operative banks are also regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and governed by the Banking Regulations Act 1949 and Banking Laws (Co-operative Societies) Act, 1955.
- The Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS) is in control of management elections and many administrative issues as well as auditing, and the RBI brought them under the Banking Regulation Act as applicable to cooperative societies.
- Urban cooperative banks have been under the radar of the RBI, but because of dual regulation either of them did not have as much control over these banks in terms of supersession of boards or removal of directors.

Structure of co-operative banks in India

- Broadly, co-operative banks in India are divided into two categories – urban and rural.
- Rural cooperative credit institutions could either be short-term or long-term in nature.
- Short-term cooperative credit institutions are further sub-divided into State Co-operative Banks, District Central Co-operative Banks, Primary Agricultural Credit Societies.
- Long-term institutions are either State Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (SCARDBs) or Primary Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks



Importance of Cooperative Banks

The cooperative banking system has to play a critical role in promoting rural finance and is especially suited to Indian conditions.

Various advantages of cooperative credit institutions are given below:

1. **Alternative Credit Source:** The main objective of the cooperative credit movement is to provide an effective alternative to the traditional defective credit system of the village moneylender.
2. **Cheap Rural Credit:** Cooperative credit system has cheapened the rural credit by charging comparatively low-interest rates, and has broken the money lender's monopoly.
3. **Productive Borrowing:** The cultivators used to borrow for consumption and other unproductive purposes. But, now, they mostly borrow for productive purposes.
4. **Encouragement to Saving and Investment:** Instead of hoarding money the rural people tend to deposit their savings in cooperative or other banking institutions.
5. **Improvement in Farming Methods:** Cooperative credit is available for purchasing improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, modern implements, etc.
6. **Financial Inclusion:** They have played a significant role in the financial inclusion of unbanked rural masses. They provide cheap credit to the masses in rural areas.

Concerns Associated with Urban Co-operative Bank

- The uncovering of large-scale financial irregularities has taken urban cooperative banks off guard.
- Low capital basis, weak corporate governance, inability to detect fraud, delayed adoption of new technologies, and insufficient system of checks and balances are difficulties confronting urban cooperative banks (UCBs).
- The latest Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act 2020 empowers the RBI with all powers, including those formerly reserved for the registrar of cooperative organizations.
- The RBI's control was limited, and it shared it with the registrar of cooperative societies of states, resulting in the much-discussed dual control and the issues it posed to the central bank.



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- The cooperative sector has two challenges:
 - first, increased competition from not just Scheduled Commercial Banks, but also from minor financing banks and payments banks;
 - second, vulnerability caused by internal shortcomings, such as the inability to detect and prevent fraud.

-Source: *The Hindu*

Sri Lanka's Opposition MPs underscore 13th Amendment

Context:

A group of Opposition MPs in Sri Lanka, representing Tamils from the north and east, hill country (Malaiyaha Tamils), and Tamil-speaking Muslims on Sunday sought the full implementation of the 13th Amendment to ensure "existing rights are not snatched away".

Relevance:

GS-II: International Relations (India's Neighbors, Foreign Policies affecting India's Interests)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. The 13th Amendment
2. Significance and expectations of the 13th Amendment
3. Concerns with the 13th Amendment

The 13th Amendment



- The 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution is an outcome of the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987, signed by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayawardene, in an attempt to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict that had aggravated into a full-fledged civil war, between the armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which led the struggle for Tamils' self-determination and sought a separate state.
- The 13th Amendment led to the creation of Provincial Councils and with that, assured a power sharing arrangement to enable all nine provinces in the country, including Sinhala majority areas, to self-govern.
- It entailed providing a form of self-government. Subjects such as education, health, agriculture, housing, land and police were to be devolved to the provincial administrations to provide them with more autonomy.

Significance and expectations of the 13th Amendment

- It sought to conclusively resolve the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka with the expectation that the established autonomy within the constitutional framework of Sri Lanka would meet the demands of the Tamilian minority without disturbing the unity of the island nation. It represents the only constitutional provision on the settlement of the long-pending Tamil question.
- The autonomy was expected to lead to a faster development process in the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka which had to bear the wrath of the civil war lag in socio economic development.
- It was also expected that the establishment of Provincial Councils would increase grassroot-level participation in Sri Lankan Democracy.

Concerns with the 13th Amendment

- Despite the well-intended provisions of devolution of power to the provincial councils, the restrictions on financial powers and overriding powers given to the President, the provincial administrations have not been effective in ensuring better lives for their citizens.
- The provisions relating to police and land have never been implemented.
- The people in favour of abolition of the provincial councils argue that the working of the councils entails huge costs and there seems to be very little improvement in governance despite this.
- They argue that in a small country the provinces could be effectively controlled by the Centre and there is no need for decentralization in such a scenario.



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- The 13th Amendment issue has been politicized and this spells trouble for comprehensively addressing the long pending ethnic issue in the island nation. The Sinhala nationalist parties see the accord and the consequent legislation as an Indian intervention into Sri Lankan domestic issues. The election season often witnesses the leaders from the Sinhala nationalist parties making welded attacks on India for political mileage.

Why is it contentious?

- The 13th Amendment carries considerable baggage from the country's civil war years.
- It was opposed vociferously by both Sinhala nationalist parties and the LTTE. The former thought it was too much power to share, while the Tigers deemed it too little.
- Though signed by the powerful President Jayawardene, it was widely perceived as an imposition by a neighbour (India) wielding hegemonic influence.
- After the Rajapaksas' emphatic win in the November 2019 presidential polls and the August 2020 general election, there are calls for the abolition of provincial councils as against the provisions of the 13th amendment.

-Source: The Hindu

US sanctions on Iran: No bearing on Chabahar port project

Context:

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar clarified that US sanctions are "not relevant" to India's Chabahar port project in Iran "at all".

Relevance:



Dimensions of the Article:

1. The Chabahar Port and its benefits for India
2. More about US Sanctions and Chabahar port

The Chabahar Port and its benefits for India

- The Chabahar Port is Located on the Gulf of Oman and is the only oceanic port of the country.
- With this, India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan.
- It will also boost India's access to Iran, the key gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.
- It also helps India counter Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the Gwadar port. Gwadar port is less than 400 km from Chabahar by road and 100 km by sea.
- With Chabahar port being developed and operated by India, Iran also becomes a military ally to India. Chabahar could be used in case China decides to flex its navy muscles by stationing ships in Gwadar port to reckon its upper hand in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Middle East.
- Trade benefits: With Chabahar port becoming functional, there will be a significant boost in the import of iron ore, sugar and rice to India. The import cost of oil to India will also see a considerable decline. India has already increased its crude purchase from Iran since the West imposed ban on Iran was lifted.
- From a diplomatic perspective, Chabahar port could be used as a point from where humanitarian operations could be coordinated.



Geo-strategic push

The consignment of wheat is the first of six shipments to be sent to Afghanistan over the next few months via Iran



■ The Iranian port of Chabahar will be New Delhi's primary gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia

■ Chabahar will help ramp up trade between India, Afghanistan and Iran in the wake of Pakistan denying transit facilities

More about US Sanctions and Chabahar port

In 2018, U.S. administration under President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of the nuclear deal with Iran [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)] amid doubts from its allies in the region of the ability of the nuclear deal to address Iran's growing influence in the region. It also reimposed economic sanctions on Iran.

However, the US has given separate exceptions for the strategic Chabahar port project because of 2 primary reasons:



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1. The US acknowledges that the Chabahar port project is not 'just' only in India's or Iran's strategic interest but also in Afghanistan's strategic interest. Afghanistan is a landlocked country which depends on Pakistan for trade. All its trade goes largely through Pakistani ports and Pakistan denies transit to India for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia. This project provides Afghanistan a strategic alternative and helps it to escape being landlocked in a sense.
 2. If in future, issues between America and Iran get resolved, then Chabahar Port will enable America to bypass Pakistan. This is significant because Pakistan still controls all the administrative routes by which Afghanistan can be supplied.

-Source: Indian Express

U.S. airlines warn 5G wireless could wreak havoc with flights

Context:

Major U.S. air carriers warned that plans by wireless carriers to use spectrum for 5G wireless services starting January 2021, could disrupt thousands of daily flights and cost air passengers \$1.6 billion annually in delays.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued two airworthiness directives (with effect from December 9, 2021) that are to create a framework as well as gather more information about the potential effects of 5G on crucial aviation safety equipment.

Relevance:

GS-III: Science and Technology

Dimensions of the Article:



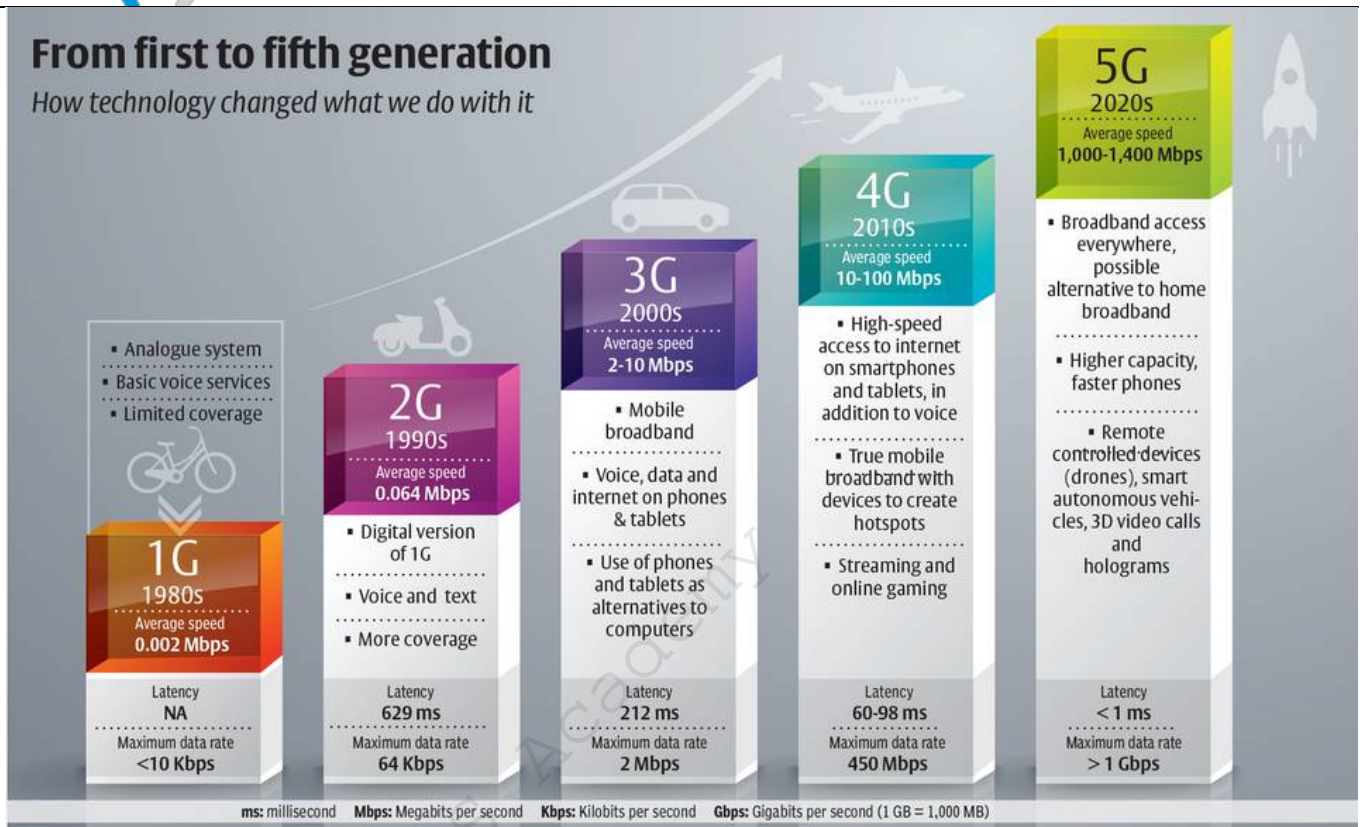
1. 5G Technology and Spectrum
2. FAA directives on 5G affecting aircraft equipment
3. About the effect of 5G on aircraft equipment
4. What about the implications for India?

5G Technology and Spectrum

- 5G is the 5th generation mobile network. It will take a much larger role than previous generations.
- Trials and the first commercial services are already showing what great potential 5G networks have. But significant amounts of widely harmonised spectrum are a must for this potential to come true. 5G spectrum is needed across three ranges: Sub-1 GHz, 1-6 GHz and above 6 GHz.
- Pioneering ultra-high speeds and the lowest latencies are dependent on access to spectrum in the latter range. Here, 26 GHz and 28 GHz have emerged as two of the most important 5G spectrum bands.
- The result means national governments around the world now have the opportunity to consider 5G spectrum assignments across the identified mmWave spectrum. In doing so, they will help deliver long-lasting socio-economic benefits.

The other mobile network generations are 1G, 2G, 3G, and 4G.

- 1G delivered analog voice.
- 2G introduced digital voice (e.g., CDMA).
- 3G brought mobile data (e.g., CDMA2000).
- 4G LTE ushered in the era of mobile Internet.



FAA directives on 5G affecting aircraft equipment

- The FAA released a Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin in 2021 that contained “early information regarding probable interference from 5G C-band wireless signals.”
- 5G poses a “threat of probable radar altimeter interference,” according to the directives. Instrument landing system approaches (ILS), required navigation performance (RNP), autonomous landing operations, and certain usage of advanced flight vision systems and other flight control systems are all prohibited operations.
- The directions will also necessitate highlighting in flight/flight operation manuals limiting flying activities when such interference is encountered.
- Some aircraft operations may be restricted from utilizing certain landing and navigation systems in areas where new 5G cellular networks may cause interference.
- Smaller planes and helicopters may face significant constraints. Flights may be canceled, delayed, or diverted as a result of these factors.
- The FAA has also asked for particular data on the locations of 5G towers, as well as their power supply and angles, in order to assess how they may interfere with aircraft approaches. This might result in “more customized alerts that are less disruptive,” according to researchers.



About the effect of 5G on aircraft equipment

- The radio altimeter is a critical instrument in contemporary commercial aircraft for accurate approaches and landings. Any disruption to internal radio altimeter measurements caused by 5G or other technology transmitting in nearby frequency bands might have severe consequences on critical systems during approach/landing.
- The problem can be exacerbated because the radio altimeter is required for any form of precision approach, which is nearly always employed at big airports nowadays.
- Other systems that rely on radio altimeter inputs include forecast windshear, ground proximity warning systems, traffic collision avoidance systems, and auto landing.

What about the implications for India?

- India was aware of the ramifications of 5G technology in the country, but there had been no official communication on the matter thus far.
- According to an analyst, 5G might be put out in India in the 3.2 GHz-3.6 GHz range, which may not interfere with aviation operations.
- In India, the DGCA should prohibit 5G towers from being built within a 15 nautical mile radius of any airfield having precision approaches such as ILS.

-Source: The Hindu

Over 2,000 cases on killing, trafficking of wild animals

Context:

Between 2018 and 2020 about 2054 cases were registered for killing or illegal trafficking of wild animals in India. In the three years about 3836 accused were arrested for the crime.



Relevance:

Prelims, GS-III: Environment and Ecology

Dimensions of the Article:

1. About the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)
2. What are the operations conducted by WCCB against illegal wildlife trade?

About the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)

- The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau was created in 2007 under the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, hence, it is a statutory body under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- WCCB is designated nodal agency for CITES related enforcement.
- Under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, WCCB is mandated to:
 - collect and collate intelligence related to organized wildlife crime;
 - disseminate the same to State and other enforcement agencies so as to apprehend the criminals;
 - to establish a centralized wildlife crime data bank;
 - co-ordinate actions by various agencies in connection with the enforcement of the provisions of the Act;
 - assist international organizations & foreign authorities to facilitate wildlife crime control;
 - capacity building of the wildlife crime enforcement agencies;
 - assist State Governments to ensure success in prosecutions related to wildlife crimes; and
 - advise the Government of India on issues relating to wildlife crimes.
- It also assists and advises the Customs authorities in inspection of the consignments of flora & fauna as per the provisions of Wild Life Protection Act, CITES and EXIM Policy governing such an item.

What are the operations conducted by WCCB against illegal wildlife trade?



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1. **Operation Save Kurma:** It focuses on the poaching, transportation and illegal trade of live turtles and tortoises.
 2. **Operation Turtshield:** It was taken up to tackle the illegal trade of live turtles.
 3. **Operation Softgold:** To tackle illegal trade in Shahtoosh shawls (made from Chiru wool).
 4. **Operation LESKNOW:** To bring the attention of the enforcement agencies within the country towards the illegal wildlife trade in lesser-known species such as Deer, Wild Boar, Jackal, Mongoose, Monitor Lizard, Sea cucumber and Pangolin.
 5. **Operation Clean Art:** To drag the attention of enforcement agencies towards illegal wildlife trade in Mongoose hairbrushes.
 6. **Operation THUNDERBIRD:** It concentrated mainly on illegal trade in species such as Tigers and other Asian big cats, Bears, Pangolins, Reptiles, Red Sanders, Sea-cucumber and seahorses.
 7. **Operation Birbil:** To curb illegal trade in wild cat and wild bird species.
 8. **Operation Wildnet:** It was aimed to draw the attention of the enforcement agencies within the country to focus their attention on the ever-increasing illegal wildlife trade over the internet using social media platforms.
 9. **Operation Freely:** It was conducted to check the illegal trade of live birds.
 10. **Operation Wetmark:** It was taken up to ensure the prohibition of the sale of meat of wild animals in wet markets across the country.

-Source: The Hindu

Crop diversification impossible without guaranteed MSP

Context:

Guaranteed minimum support prices (MSP) for all crops may be the best route to crop diversification in Punjab and Haryana, farmers think.

Relevance:



Dimensions of the Article:

1. What is Minimum Support Price (MSP)?
2. Why is there a need for MSP?
3. Crop Diversification
4. Why Guaranteed MSP is necessary in Punjab and Haryana for crop diversification?
5. How will MSP ensure Crop Diversity?

What is Minimum Support Price (MSP)?

- Minimum Support Price is the price at which government purchases crops from the farmers, whatever may be the price for the crops.
- Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) in the Ministry of Agriculture recommends MSPs for 23 crops. These include 14 grown during the kharif/post-monsoon season (see table) and six in rabi/winter (wheat, barley, chana, masur, mustard and safflower), apart from sugarcane, jute and copra
- CACP consider various factors while recommending the MSP for a commodity like cost of cultivation, supply and demand situation for the commodity; market price trends (domestic and global) and parity vis-à-vis other crops etc.
- MSP seeks to:
 - Assured Value: To give guaranteed prices and assured market to the farmers and save them from the price fluctuations (National or International).
 - Improving Productivity: By encouraging higher investment and adoption of modern technologies in agricultural activities.
 - Consumer Interest: To safeguard the interests of consumers by making available supplies at reasonable prices.

Why is there a need for MSP?

- The MSP is a minimum price guarantee that acts as a safety net or insurance for farmers when they sell particular crops.
- The guaranteed price and assured market are expected to encourage higher investment and in adoption of modern technologies in agricultural activities.
- With globalization resulting in freer trade in agricultural commodities, it is very important to protect farmers from the unwarranted fluctuation in prices.



Crop Diversification

- Crop diversification refers to the addition of new crops or cropping systems to agricultural production on a particular farm taking into account the different returns from value-added crops with complimentary marketing opportunities.
- Crop diversity is fundamental to agricultural growth. Crop diversity enables farmers and plant breeders to develop higher yielding, more productive varieties that have the improved quality characteristics required by farmers and desired by consumers.
- Diversified farms are usually more economically and ecologically resilient. By growing a variety of crops, farmers are at economic risk and are less susceptible to the drastic price fluctuations associated with changes in supply and demand.

Why Guaranteed MSP is necessary in Punjab and Haryana for crop diversification?

- Guaranteed minimum support prices (MSP) for all crops may be the best way for Punjab and Haryana to diversify their crop portfolios.
- Because of the high levels of purchase, farmers in these two states already benefit from MSP rates for paddy and wheat.
- Input prices are also lower in areas with more water availability and less demand for fertilizers and pesticides than in Punjab.
- Punjab is experiencing fast groundwater depletion at a rate of up to 120 centimeters per year.
- Paddy and sugarcane consume half of the country's water resources, owing to procurement regulations that skew profitability and distort cropping patterns.
- Maize, for example, takes one-fifth the irrigation water that rice does, but farmers are hesitant of switching to a crop where remunerative prices are not assured.

How will MSP ensure Crop Diversity?

- Crop diversification is unachievable in the absence of a fixed MSP.
- If all crops were procured, rather than just rice and wheat, the ordinary Punjab farmer would abandon paddy in favor of safflower, moong, or chana dal.
- According to Agriculture Ministry figures, Punjab and Haryana have accounted for more than half of the government's acquisition of wheat and paddy during the previous five years.
- The government buys at MSP more than 85 percent of the wheat and paddy grown in



Punjab and 75 percent of the paddy grown in Haryana.

- The assistance might also aid in resolving the issue of stubble burning, which has clouded the sky of northern India.

-Source: The Hindu

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